

theologians were no better. In his political writings he had reduced all power ecclesiastical and civil to the same sovereign authority. His present task was to lay the true foundations of natural philosophy and to drive away the ghost of metaphysics by letting in the light. The Dedicatory Epistle displays his eager interest in science and the high value he placed on his labours. "I know already by experience how much greater thanks will be due than paid me for telling men the truth of what men are." The brief Epistle to the Reader explains that his philosophy is the simple natural reason, which proceeds to clear up the confusions of thought. He is as cocksure and as superficial as Bacon himself.

The book is divided into four parts. The first deals with logic, the definition of terms and the methods of reasoning. The second discusses what he calls the first grounds of philosophy, such as place and time, cause and effect, identity and difference. The third is devoted to geometry. The fourth reviews the phenomena of nature, astronomy, physics, the senses. He realizes that in this final section he is skating on thin ice and encourages others to do better if they can. All he asks is that their hypotheses shall be conceivable, and that they avoid such conceptions as occult qualities and other empty words of schoolmen. The system has been accurately described by Dilthey as atomistic materialism. Hobbes was convinced that nothing exists or can exist, nothing is known or can ever be known, except bodies. All phenomena are to be explained by their motions. What seem to us mental activities and experiences are merely functions of the living body. Man is a composite system of physical particles, subject to the myriad influences of the external world operating through the medium of the senses. These

external changes
or motions set up internal reactions of the
mind and the
passions, according to the laws of our being, of
which the
instinct of self-preservation is the chief. In a
word man is a
marvellous piece of clockwork. Freedom of the
will is an
illusion, for causation is universal. Thus man
fits into the
larger framework of the natural world like a
hand into the
glove.

If the author of *De Corpore* had returned to life
in the middle
decades of the nineteenth century, the heyday of
materialism
and positivism, the intellectual climate would
have suited him
perfectly. The unification of knowledge in a
single system
was a noble conception, though it was far
from new; but it